

Sūrah Shams

Central Theme, Relationship with the Preceding *Sūrah* and Analysis of the Discourse

In Sūrah Balad, the previous *sūrah*, the leaders of the Quraysh were warned that when they came to inhabit Makkah, they had to lead a life full of struggle. Makkah at that time was a desolate and barren piece of land. It was as a result of the supplication of Abraham (sws) and the blessings of the House of God that they received abundance in food and sustenance that made them prosper. Hence after receiving these favours, they should not be overcome with conceit, and spread anarchy in the society. They should remember that the God who has bestowed all these things to them can also snatch them away from them and no one can stop Him from this.

In this *sūrah*, they are warned of their fate should they persist in their arrogance and haughtiness. The *sūrah* begins with the assertion of the fact that this world apparently is a place of opposing forces and elements; however, the Almighty does not allow these opposing forces to exceed their limits with the result that not only these opposing forces do not collide with each other, they on the other hand serve this universe in complete harmony with each other and it is this harmony which guarantees its existence; otherwise, this world would have been destroyed in no time.

After this, an indication is made of the way a human soul is made. The state of this lesser world (ie the human soul) is not different from that of the greater world. This world is also an amalgam of opposing motives and forces and the Almighty has also inspired the human soul with good and evil and inclined it towards good and made it hate evil. It is a requirement of this awareness that a person should maintain the balance of his soul and not let evil motives dominate the good ones. If he is unable to do so, he will become arrogant, and exceed limits and the practice of God is that He does not like arrogance and disorder. He gives respite to these things as far as they remain in expedience to this world. When these things cross the bounds, the Almighty destroys them and cleanses His world from people whose existence becomes dangerous for it in their collective capacity.

At the end, in order to cite an example of this practice of the Almighty,

the Qur'ān mentions the destruction of a nation from amongst the previous nations whose might and majesty was well known to the Quraysh and whose arrogance and rebelliousness is alluded to in their literature. The Quraysh are asked to seek a lesson from their fate and are warned that if they adopt the same arrogant attitude, they too would be seized by the Almighty and no one would be able to help them.

Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَالشَّمْسُ وَضُحَاهَا (١) وَالْقَمَرُ إِذَا تَلَاهَا (٢) وَالنَّهَارُ إِذَا جَلَّاهَا (٣) وَاللَّيْلُ إِذَا يَغْشَاهَا (٤) وَالسَّمَاءُ وَمَا بَنَاهَا (٥) وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَا طَحَاهَا (٦) وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا (٧) فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا (٨) قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا (٩) وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا (١٠) كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ بِطَغْوَاهَا (١١) إِذْ انْبَعَثَ أَشْقَاهَا (١٢) فَقَالَ لَهُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ نَاقَةَ اللَّهِ وَسُقْيَاهَا (١٣) فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَعَقَرُوهَا فَدَمْدَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ فَسَوَّاهَا (١٤) وَلَا يَخَافُ عُقْبَاهَا (١٥)

The sun bears witness and its ascent and the moon when it follows it, and the day when it illuminates it, and the night when it enshrouds it, and the sky and the way it is raised bears witness and the earth and the way it is laid out and the soul and the way it is perfected. Then was given awareness of its evil and its good. He succeeded who purified it and he failed who soiled it. (1-10)

The Thamūd denied because of their rebellious attitude when their most wretched person rose. So the Messenger of God warned them of the she-camel of God and her turn to drink. But they rejected him and slaughtered the she-camel; so because of this crime, their Lord let loose His scourge upon them and routed them and He has no fear of its consequences. (11-15)

Explanation

وَالشَّمْسُ وَضُحَاهَا (١) وَالْقَمَرُ إِذَا تَلَاهَا (٢) وَالنَّهَارُ إِذَا جَلَّاهَا (٣) وَاللَّيْلُ إِذَا يَغْشَاهَا (٤)¹

In these verses, attention has been drawn to some manifest physical phenomena which act in compliment to each other. The arguments which the Qur'ān has drawn on this basis of complementarity to substantiate the beliefs of monotheism and the Day of Judgement have been

1. The sun bears witness and its ascent and the moon when it follows it, and the day when it illuminates it, and the night when it enshrouds it.

explained in the previous *sūrahs*. Here, in these verses, the specific aspect which is brought in focus is that although the sun and the moon and the night and day are seemingly opposing to one another as regards their appearance and temperament as well as the effects they cause, however, the Schemer of this world has placed all these parts in the machinery of this globe in such a manner that they do not clash with one another in the slightest way; on the other hand, they work in complete harmony with one another in their respective spheres keeping in view the collective expedience of the universe. Neither does the sun interfere with movement of the moon nor does the moon push itself to appear before its appointed time; neither does the day dare emerge before its appointed time nor does the night have the power to terminate before time the duty the day must observe: لَا الشَّمْسُ يَنْبَغِي لَهَا أَنْ تُدْرِكَ الْقَمَرَ وَلَا اللَّيْلُ سَابِقُ النَّهَارِ وَكُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ (٤٠:٣٦) (neither is the sun allowed to overtake the moon, nor does the night outpace the day, (36:40)).

It is on the harmony of these opposing forces and elements that the existence and sustenance of this universe depends. If instead of this harmony and accord, these opposing forces exceed the limits, then in no time will this universe be destroyed. For this reason, the Creator of this universe has made them observe certain limits. And thus by their very existence these elements give the message to the living beings of this world that they too should lead a life within the bounds set for them by God. If they violate these limits, they will create disorder in this world and the Lord of this world does not put up with people who create disorder in His kingdom.

وَالسَّمَاءِ وَمَا بَنَاهَا (٥) وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا طَحَاهَا (٦)²

Attention is first directed to the structure of the sky, its enormity and the blessings which exude from it: all this bears witness to the great power, profound wisdom and boundless providence of their maker. The greatest of tasks is not impossible for Him. His wisdom is immense and His mercy and providence are all-embracing. It is the essential requirement of His power, wisdom and providence that people should not be allowed to go scot-free in this world for all their deeds; He should see what people for whom He has made all this do and then reward or punish them accordingly. If He does not do this, then this would mean that all His power and wisdom, mercy and providence are purposeless and this universe is a meaningless creation.

The question arises about the particle مَا in وَمَا بَنَاهَا and وَمَا طَحَاهَا

2. And the sky and its structure bears witness and the earth and its expanse.

whether it is of the nature of a verbal noun (مصدرية) or is demonstrative (موصولة). In my opinion, it is the former. If it is regarded as the latter, then it would refer to God whereas all these oaths are not sworn by Him; they are on the contrary sworn by His signs and the phenomenon He has created. They are meant to specifically direct our attention to those aspects which are meant to convey a message to mankind which can open for them the path of guidance delineated in this *sūrah*. The oaths sworn by the sun, moon, day and night are qualified by clauses such as إِذَا يَغْشَاهَا (when it enshrouds it) and إِذَا جَلَّاهَا (when it illuminates it) and إِذَا تَلَّاهَا (when it follows it). This qualification is meant to set right our point of view. If, in this context, it is said: “I swear by the sky and by He who has made it,” by regarding the particle مَا to be demonstrative, then the nature of this oath will be different from the ones mentioned earlier. One part of this oath will connote bearing witness and the other will be an oath sworn by what is sacred and revered, which would be out of place here. The Almighty has presented the bearing of witness of His signs here and not of His own self. Moreover, referring to God through the particle مَا is not appropriate as well.

It should be kept in consideration that when the particle مَا is used in the sense of a verbal noun, it does not merely convert a verb into a verbal noun, it also directs our attention to the majesty, grandeur, wisdom, uniqueness and creativity hidden or apparent in the verb. Thus for example, the words وَمَا بَنَاهَا which qualify the sky would mean: “and the sky and its amazing structure bear witness.” Implied in it would be all the marvels and wonders of the heavens towards which the Qur’ān has called our attention in its varied style and used them as an argument to substantiate its basic premises. It is obvious that if مَا is used as a demonstrative noun then it would not have the capability in it to allude to all this reasoning. Because of this comprehensive nature of مَا used in the sense of a verbal noun, it is quite difficult to translate it. Some Arabs have translated it keeping in view its comprehensive nature; however, since in Urdu³ this style does not exist, I have not been able to translate it fully even though I have tried my best.

The sentence وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَا طَحَاهَا (and the earth and its expanse bears witness) should also be understood keeping in view the above aspects. In Sūrah Ghāshiyah, it is said: (وَإِلَى الْأَرْضِ كَيْفَ سُطِحَتْ (88:20)) (and [do they not see] the earth, how it has been spread out? (88:20)). I have explained there that implied in this concise and terse statement are details which the Qur’ān has delineated at other places while referring to the marvels and

3. The case of English is no different. (Translator)

wonders of the earth and used them to substantiate its various claims. In other words, the facts on which the word كَيْفَ (how) in this verse of Sūrah Ghāshiyah induces a person to reflect, for the same purpose, the مَا used in the sense of a verbal noun is employed here. However, there is a subtle difference between the nature of the two, an explanation of which is beyond the scope of the discussion intended here.

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا (٧) فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا (٨) قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا (٩) وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا (١٠)⁴

After the signs in the world around man, attention is directed to the world within him: if a person reflects on his soul, it will become evident to him that His creator has fashioned it thus that the awareness of good and evil is found in it. Obviously, the reason for giving him this awareness is that man should adopt good and shield himself from evil. An obvious outcome of this premise is that only he will succeed who cleanses himself from evil and he will fail who will contaminate it with sins. In other words, the view that a person will not be held accountable for his deeds is something which is against the testimony of his own soul.

The word نَفْس has not been defined by the article *alif lām* and thus it can connote magnitude (*tafkhīm*), multitude (*kathrah*) as well as scarcity (*taqlīl*). In my opinion, here it connotes magnitude (*tafkhīm*). Good examples of this usage are found in previous *sūrahs*. It is stated in Sūrah Burūj: (٣:٨٥) وَشَهِدَ وَمَشْهُودٌ (and one who sees and that what is seen bear witness! (85:3)) and in Sūrah Balad: (٣:٩٠) وَالِدٍ وَمَا وَلَدَ (the father and his progeny bear witness, (90:3)) and, at these places, this usage has been explained. Similar is the use of this word here. The purpose is to direct attention towards the astounding sagacity and propriety found in the human soul and towards its outstanding hidden and apparent abilities.

In the expression وَمَا سَوَّاهَا also, the particle مَا is in the sense of a verbal noun and, as is explained above, directing our attention to the astounding sagacity and propriety found in the human soul as referred to earlier. The Qur'ān has explained this at various places and has argued that the Almighty cannot make something so highly gifted without a purpose; hence it is essential that a day come when it be held accountable before its Lord for its abilities and the favours it has been blessed with.

I have explained the word تَسْوِيَةً (the verbal noun of the verb سَوَّى at various instances in this *tafsīr* that it is used to imply the final stage of

4. And the soul and the perfection given to it. Thus was given awareness of its evil and its good. He succeeded who purified it and he failed who corrupted it.

the process of creation. Thus for example it is said: (الَّذِي خَلَقَ فَسَوَّى (٢:٨٧) (Who has created all things and perfected them, (87:2)). It is evident from this verse that here it is not merely the initial stage of the creation of the human soul which is referred to in this oath, its final stage is also in consideration when it emerged as a masterpiece of God's creativity and became a witness through its own existence that man has come in this world with certain responsibilities. He is God's vice-gerent and answerable before him.

The sentence فَالْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا (thus was given awareness of its evil and its good) depicts the details of تَسْوِيَةً. It is in this final stage of the process of man's creation that the Almighty has infused in him a divine spark. It is this divine spark which enables a person to discern good from evil. In the previous *sūrah*, this aspect is referred to by the words: وَهَدَيْنَاهُ (and shown him the two paths? (90:10)) and I have explained it there. Those interested can take a look. For more details, the *tafsīrs* of Sūrah Qiyāmah and Sūrah Dahr can be consulted.

The sentences وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا (he succeeded who purified it and he failed who corrupted it) state the obvious and necessary outcome of the awareness of good and evil found in man: When a person has been given the awareness of good and evil, then it is his obligation to adopt good and shun evil. It is this attitude which will lead him to success in this world and in the next. If, on the contrary, he adopts the path of vice, this will lead him to a wretched and miserable fate.

The word دَسَّاهَا is actually دَسَّاسَهَا from دَسَّسَ the root which means "to wrap up something in dirt and to put something into dirt." It is this word which has been transformed into دَسَّاهَا and this transformation has added an emphasis in its meaning (ie absolutely contaminating a thing with dirt). Examples of such transformations are found in Arabic, for example تَطَلَّنَ from تَطَلَّى.

I have regarded adopting good and shunning evil as an obvious outcome of the awareness of good and evil because it is incumbent upon man to correctly use every favour God has bestowed on him. This is in his own interest and also the right way of expressing gratitude for this favour. In other words, if he does not do this, it is as if he is wrecking his own self. Thus, it is incumbent upon a person who has been blessed with two eyes by the Almighty to open his eyes and be vigilant of the ups and downs of the path he is treading. If he walks with eyes shut, there is a strong probability that he might fall in a pit and he himself would be responsible for this mishap and no other person.

A question arises about the complement of oath (*muqsam 'alayh*), ie the premise which is to be substantiated by these oaths. The verses

وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا (he succeeded who purified it and he failed who corrupted it) have been regarded by some to be this complement. However, Zamakhsharī has rejected this opinion and there is weight in his rejection. The oaths which are sworn here by the sun, the moon, the day and the night are referring to the fact that the reins of all elements of this world are in the hands of an all-powerful and self-sustaining Being who does not let them leave their specified paths otherwise this world would be destroyed by the clash of its opposing elements. After this, the oaths sworn by the sky and the earth are referring to the power, wisdom and providence of the Creator of this world and the objective is to bring forth the fact that it is the essential requisite of His attributes that no one be allowed to go scot-free and everyone be held accountable for his deeds.

The third oath is sworn by the way human soul has been formed which occupies the status of evidence born by man's inner self. The Qur'ān itself has clarified this oath: when the Creator has ingrained the awareness of good and evil within man's nature then this would necessarily mean that he who adopts good will succeed and he who gives way to evil will meet a dreadful fate.

It is evident from this that وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا (he succeeded who purified it and he failed who corrupted it) is not the *muqsam 'alayh*; it is in fact an explanation of one aspect of the last stated oath. The *muqsam 'alayh* should be such that it should encompass the natural outcome of all the oaths. For this reason, I think that Zamakhsharī's view is sound when he says that an ellipsis of the *muqsam 'alayh* has occurred here. The reason for this is that this last part has actually hinted towards it so that there is no need to express it in words. Several examples of ellipses of the *muqsam 'alayh* can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*. The benefit of this ellipses is that everything which is obvious from the oaths can be regarded as suppressed in the capacity of the *muqsam 'alayh*. It is difficult to state it here in words; however, one of its prominent aspects can be stated thus: the Creator of the world does not put up with the rebellion of a nation and necessarily destroys it.

Here the philosophy of history presented by the Qur'ān, to which I have alluded at various places of this *tafsīr*, should be kept in mind that as far as nations are concerned they are punished for their rebelliousness in their collective capacity in this very world. In the Hereafter, each person will be held accountable in his personal capacity and will be rewarded or punished accordingly.

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ بِطَغْوَاهَا (١١) إِذْ انْبَعَثَ أَشْقَاهَا (١٢) فَقَالَ لَهُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ نَاقَةَ اللَّهِ وَسُقْيَاهَا

(١٣) فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَعَقَرُوهَا فَدَمْدَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ فَسَوَّاهَا (١٤)⁵

After presenting evidence from the world around man and that within him, historical evidence is presented to substantiate the premise stated earlier: a nation which resorts to rebelliousness is given respite during which it is communicated the truth to the extent that it is left with no excuse to deny the truth and after that if it insists on this denial, the Almighty necessarily destroys it. The evidence from the world around man and that within him usually relates to reflection and deliberation and thus is beneficial for the intellectuals; it does not effect the common man the way it should. For such people, evidence from incidents and events are more effective on the condition that they are at least capable of drawing a lesson from such events. For this reason, the Qur'ān has also cited historical evidence⁶ besides evidence from the world within man and that around him so that every type of individual is covered in presenting arguments.

At other places, the Qur'ān has mentioned many nations to highlight this aspect; here, only one nation: the Thamūd is mentioned. Some reasons for this are very apparent.

One of the reasons is that from among the ancient nations of Arabia, the Quraysh were relatively more aware of their history. My mentor, Imām Farāhī, has discussed their history and their resemblance with the Quraysh in detail. Following are some of its important excerpts:

The Qur'ān has presented those nations before the Quraysh to seek a lesson from whose history were well known to them. It would be incorrect to conclude that just as the words كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ (the Thamūd denied) portray a hazy account of the Thamūd before us, similarly, these words presented the Quraysh too with very sketchy details about them. Whatever is mentioned in this *sūrah* about the Thamūd was enough to point to their complete history for the Quraysh. They belonged to ancient Arabia whose settlements and traditions were inherited by the Quraysh. They were often discussed by the Quraysh in their everyday conversation. The Qur'ān itself is the greatest

5. The Thamūd denied because of their rebellious attitude when their most wretched person rose. So the Messenger of God warned them of the she-camel of God and her turn to drink. But they rejected him and slaughtered the she-camel; so because of this crime, their Lord let lose His scourge upon them and routed them

6. It may be kept in consideration here that historical evidence also belongs to evidence presented from the world around man; however, because of its special importance, I have mentioned it here as a separate category.

witness to this claim of ours.

The poets have also mentioned the Thamūd as a well-known nation:

ولاقاه من الايام يوم
كما من قبل لم يخلد قدار

(And he was destroyed by the vicissitudes of time the way Qidār too before this could not survive forever.)

In this couplet, Qidār refers to Aḥmar Thamūd, who was the leader of the Thamūd and who killed the she-camel. He was an autocratic and rebellious leader much like Qayl ibn ‘Umar of the ‘Ād people. The famous poet al-Afwah al-Awdī has compared the evil elements of his nation to Qayl and Qidār thus:

فينا معاشر لم يبنوا لقومهم
وان بنى قومهم ما افسد واعادوا

(There are some pranksters among us who have done nothing for their nation and if their nation sets right what they had messed up, they again messed it up.)

لا يرشد ون ولن يرعو المرشدهم
والجهل منهم معا والغى ميعاد

(They neither guide themselves nor listen to those who guide them; Being overcome by emotions and being rebellious are two traits simultaneously present in them.)

اضحوا اكفيل بن عمرو في عشيرته
اذا هلك بالذى سدى لها عاد

(In their nation, they can be compared to the Qayl ibn ‘Umar who was responsible for the destruction of ‘Ād.)

او بعده كقدار حين تابعد
على الغواية اقوام فقد بادوا

(Or after him, they can be compared to Qidār who was followed by people while being misled and were destroyed.)

It is evident from these couplets that the rebelliousness of the Thamūd, the error and deviance of their leaders and the details of their exemplary fate was so well known to the Arabs that their poets would often quote them in a proverbial style. Thus this brief reference made by the Qur'ān was actually not brief for the Arabs; in fact, through these few words, they could gauge all the details of the of the grievous fate met by the Thamūd.

One needs to specially keep in consideration the word طَغَوَى in the expression كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ بِطَغْوَاهَا. It means insurgency and rebelling against the bounds and limits set by the Almighty. The insurgency referred to here is specially the one which a nation perpetrates after the truth has become fully evident to it. The reason that this word needs to be kept in special consideration is that it relates to the central theme of the *sūrah*. I have already indicated in the introduction to this *sūrah* that the Almighty does not like the rebelliousness of a nation. A nation which adopts such an attitude is given some respite after which it is necessarily destroyed. It is clearly evident from this word that the Thamūd denied their prophet not because the truth was not obvious to them; they in fact denied him after the truth had become obvious to them merely out of their arrogance and rebelliousness.

The words إِذْ انْبَعَثَ أَشْقَاهَا express the details of their rebelliousness. The word انْبَعَثَ refers to Qidār, the leader of the Thamūd whose callousness became the source of destruction for the whole nation. The word انْبَعَثَ means “to rise and to get ready” and here it refers to his getting ready for his crime, which opened the doors of God’s wrath on the whole nation. An explanation of this has already been furnished in the *tafsīr* of the verses 27-29 of Sūrah Qamar. When Ṣāliḥ (sws) the prophet sent to the Thamūd warned them of God’s punishment, they out of their rebelliousness demanded a sign of this punishment otherwise they would not listen to him. On this demand, Ṣāliḥ (sws) nominated a she-camel as a sign for this punishment and at the same time prescribed a test for them. She will have a specific turn in drinking water from a pond and on the day she drinks no one else should drink with her; they should drink on other days. How could they abide by this restriction? They protested against this with their leader. He rose in venom and hamstrung the she-camel. After this, the Almighty granted them a respite of three days to repent from their heinous act; however, this respite only increased their vanity and at last the punishment of God decimated them.

Consider next the verse: فَقَالَ لَهُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ نَاقَةَ اللَّهِ وَسُقْيَاهَا (so the Messenger of Allah warned them of the she-camel of Allah and her turn

to drink). These words portray that when Ṣāliḥ (sws) saw that the callous Qidār had resolved to destroy the wall which shielded the Thamūd from the wrath of God, he warned them for the last time that they should beware of the she-camel of God and her turn to drink water otherwise they will have to face the punishment of God.

The phrase **نَاقَةُ اللَّهِ** is declined in the accusative on account of *tahdhīr* which means that an ellipsis of a verb which conveys the meaning of warning and admonition has occurred here. The eloquence in this ellipsis is that the attention of the listener is completely focused on what is being said. This style in which one intends to warn some is common in many languages also.

The sentence **فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَعَقَرُوهَا** (but they rejected him and slaughtered the she camel) refers to the fact just as earlier the Thamūd had rejected the threat of being punished by the Almighty, similarly, they did not care about this final warning of their Prophet (sws) and went on to reject it as well by regarding it to be mere intimidation and a pressure tactic.

The word **عَقَرَ** means to hamstring a camel. After this, a camel faces certain death. Hence, this word also implies killing. However, this is a “resultant” meaning and not the primary one.

Here one thing that needs to be kept in consideration is that although only one person was responsible for killing the she-camel, the Almighty has regarded the whole nation to have perpetrated this crime and has punished the whole nation as well. From this, an important statute of the Qur’ānic philosophy of history can be gauged viz: The Almighty punishes a whole nation for the crime of a single individual if that whole nation sanctions the crime of that individual. Only those people are saved from this punishment who try whatever they can to reform that individual and if they are unable to do anything then at least they dissociate themselves from that person – this being the lowest level of faith. Below this, there is neither any level of faith nor any way out to shield oneself from the wrath of God.

The word **دَمَدَمَ** in the expression **فَدَمَدَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ يَذَّيْبُهُمْ** means to kill someone but implied in it is also the intensity and severity of the act of killing which cannot be conveyed by a word which simply means to kill. A true rendering of this would be: “When their Lord sent on them a resounding punishment.” The Qur’ānic words: **فَصَبَّ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّكَ سَوْطَ عَذَابٍ** (۱۳:۸۹) (so your Lord let loose on them the lashes of His punishment, (89:13)) convey a similar meaning. Under verse thirty seven of Sūrah Qamar, I have already alluded to the nature of this punishment: it was an amalgam of winter clouds, hail-storm, horrific thunder, lightning and tempestuous winds. The word **دَمَدَمَ** is very appropriate for such a

punishment.

The word بِدَنِّيهِمْ (because of this crime) shows that this punishment was meted out to them because in spite of being warned by the Almighty and His prophet they were audacious enough to harm the she-camel. This she-camel was a sign of divine punishment and as has been explained in Sūrah Qamar, it was made a trial for them so that the extent of rebelliousness of the whole nation could be adjudged. Obviously, any further respite after this would have seen them go after the life of the Messenger of God and this is a crime for which the Almighty does not grant reprieve to any nation. In fact, whenever a nation planned to kill their Messenger, it was necessarily destroyed. This divine practice has been alluded to at various places in this *tafsīr*.

It seems that this *sūrah* was revealed at the time when the leaders of the Quraysh had begun to conspire in their gatherings and in the Dār al-Nadwah to kill the Prophet (sws). Since these mutual consultations were covert, the Qur'ān too instead of openly warning the Quraysh has merely hinted to them that if they are nurturing an evil scheme in their hearts they should fully contemplate its consequences.

The word فَسَوَّاهَا refers to the fact that the scourge and punishment of the Almighty absolutely flattened and steamrolled them. The antecedent of the feminine pronoun هَا in فَسَوَّاهَا declined in the accusative can be the Thamūd or the settlements of the Thamūd.

وَلَا يَخَافُ عُقْبَاهَا (١٥)⁷

The implication is that when the Almighty destroys a nation in such a manner, He does so in accordance with His practice that He has set on the basis of His all embracing knowledge and profound power for the welfare and well-being of this world. Hence, He has neither any fear of the fact that there can be any error in His decision as far as its consequences are concerned nor does He have any fear that anyone can challenge it. He is neither accountable before anyone nor anyone has any power over Him.

In a passing way, this verse also refutes the statements of the Torah which its narrators have inserted into it. For example:

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. (Genesis, 5:5-6)

7. And He has no fear of its consequences.

Similarly, it is mentioned after Noah's deluge:

And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. (Genesis, 8:21)

With this, I come to the end of the *tafsīr* of this *sūrah*. فَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ عَلَى إِحْسَانِهِ (Gratitude be to God for His favour)

Lahore,
16th January, 1980 AD
27th Šafr, 1400 AH
